



Canada-United States Law Journal

Volume 16 | Issue

Article 37

January 1990

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Discussion

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Recommended Citation

Discussion, *Discussion after the Speeches of Peter Morici and H. Ian Macdonald*, 16 Can.-U.S. L.J. 311 (1990)

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cuslj/vol16/iss/37>

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Discussion After the Speeches of Peter Morici and H. Ian Macdonald

QUESTION, *Professor King*: Mr. Morici, you spoke of local autonomy and the great diversity in U.S. society. I am concerned with the balance between autonomy and control, especially in an area that has traditionally been within the province of the states and local districts. What similar types of controls are necessary to achieve your objective?

ANSWER, *Mr. Morici*: We do have state education standards, however, they are very low. For example, in Fairfax County, where my wife teaches, the students view the basic competency exam that they must take in the eleventh grade as a bit of a joke.

When I talk about autonomy, I am speaking in terms of the educators, the schools, not necessarily just the community. I am not talking about breaking school boards into smaller units. We should entrust to the local educators the kind of confidence we have for the local hospital and expect a certain level of competence.

A principal in the South Bronx cannot be judged by the same standards as one in Westchester County. However, we have been unwilling to change the management in schools when they do not perform well. In giving autonomy to the school, the trade-off is that if a principal cannot adjust and manage his school in a more reasonable way and deliver better results, then there has to be changes.

QUESTION, *Mr. Marlais*: Where in the structure of the American educational system bureaucracy do we make this effort to embody our local schools with the autonomy necessary in light of the bureaucracy that exists? Where can we find the political pressure that is necessary in order to pass the legislation that is needed to empower the schools? How do you suggest fighting the entrenched bureaucracy at the state and local level?

ANSWER, *Mr. Morici*: The answer really comes down to the notion of making a market for effective schools. Choice is not going to achieve that by itself, because in reality many school districts simply do not have any choices. I think what we need to have is a lot more information about how each school performs.

For example, let us examine what New York State does and how. I think it is time that each state administer a set of regents examinations as they do in New York. When I was growing up in New York, you received a diploma if you just went to school, but you earned a regents diploma if you passed the seven or eight regents exams that were taken while you were in high school. The regents diploma was essential to gain

acceptance into a state university. That still exists. Schools should publish their exam scores to give parents a sense of what is going on.

Minimum competency exams just do not tell us very much about how individual schools compare to one another. Furthermore, I think they ought to publish the SAT scores, as private schools do. Private schools publish the admissions performance of their schools, in terms of the universities and colleges that their college bound students are admitted to. However, not everyone has those kinds of aspirations.

The National Association of Business suggests a basic high school-ending exam to test the general curriculum as well as a series of other tests based on courses that students take for vocational purposes. This would be a basic, voluntary exam, based on the same concept as the regents exam. The information would thus be in a national data bank. Companies such as Southwest Bell, for example, would not have to administer their own exams.

If we began publishing those scores, and established an exam like that, businesses would start requesting those scores from new high school graduates seeking a job. Then education would become more important in blue collar households since the concern would be whether the child would achieve a score that would make him placable. It is a matter of placing greater emphasis on education and on the ability to write intelligibly. We need more information about the schools our children go to and the results that education can produce.

How do we choose schools even if we were given a choice? If there is no choice because, for instance, the schools in a locality are not performing well, then the parents are going to get angry. That will, in turn, create pressure on the bureaucracy. Frankly, I think we should ask ourselves, "What is the level of control that we would be willing to work with in order to achieve the quality of education that we want for our children?"

We must start to consider doing in education what we are starting to think about doing in the military, and what we have done in the private sector. During the 1950s and 1960s, when times were good and money was easy, we built up bureaucracy. In areas where there is international competition, we tore down bureaucracy. I think we have to start to say, "Do we really need to have forty-five percent of the professionals in American public education not standing in the classroom?" And if the answer is no, then I think we have to start to trim that bureaucracy. By its nature that would establish the principal as the point person between the public and the teachers.

QUESTION, Professor King: Mr. Macdonald did you have any comment on the problem that Mr. Morici is addressing? Do you find a comparable situation in the Canadian secondary schools? Are your schools in good shape?

ANSWER, Mr. Macdonald: Everyone seems to have their own opinion on these things, but from what I have learned in my own experi-

ence and observations in Canada and from what I have heard about the United States, it would sound to me as if we are in a little bit better shape in this respect than you are. But beyond that, I would not venture to comment unless there is something more specific.

QUESTION, Mr. Brown: What else needs to be changed in the universities in Canada, in addition to a larger supply of dollars, in order to get more effectiveness out of our university education?

ANSWER, Mr. Macdonald: There are some specific things associated with underfunding, and I mentioned some of those in the sciences. It is only underfunding relative to the potential of what you could do with your capacity and with your human resources. Since more and probably better research can be done, it is underfunded. There is no doubt that in the scientific field, there is a fairly direct correlation between money and performance. This exists because in the research granting mechanism in Canada, the scrutiny and the peer evaluation is very rigorous indeed, and that is by the standards of academics in other countries who have observed the scientific research evaluation process in Canada.

The real underfunding problem in Canada has been a relative one, in that we have had such an explosion of numbers. In my own ten years as president of York University, we have had an increase of forty percent in undergraduate enrollment. This has occurred because we are now in the middle of the fastest growing demographic region in the country. Furthermore, more people were applying while at the same time throughout that period, we were also steadily increasing the standards of admissions. So, the increase was not a matter of a reduction in our qualitative standards, but seems to have been in spite of them.

There was simply a direct correlation between numbers and the need to have money to deliver what is a policy in the province of Ontario of all government parties, that anyone who is able to meet the standards shall have a place in an Ontario university.

I used to say to members of our board of governors that in the ten years I have been president of the university, the rate of increase of income each year was less than the rate of inflation, but our undergraduate enrollment has increased by forty percent. I would say that I wanted one of them to show me a productivity improvement process comparable to that in one of their own businesses.

The broader pedagogical question is how to take those circumstances of underfunding and increased enrollment and improve the quality of the universities. One primary consideration is the quality of professors. However, to obtain and keep good professors, universities must be able to provide good salaries and tenure.

There will always be evidence that a certain number of individuals, without the protection of tenure, would probably not survive the system. However, I can only say that in my own experience, I have been pretty pleased with the results. Professional people mature at different rates

over different periods of time which is something that tenure systems need to take into account. We have a system in our university, not unlike others, where there is a departmental review, faculty review and finally a senate committee vote of a professor's file for tenure. So, there are three stages. If there is a split vote, the president of the university decides whether that person receives tenure or not.

In the beginning of my career, I backed ten faculty members for whom there was a split vote and quite a bit of difference of opinion. Ten years later, four of them are fellows of the Royal Society of Canada; two others are widely acclaimed for the research that they have done; three others have not done as much research, but three of them have won the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Members Association Teaching Awards. Not bad for ten individuals who seemed to have matured professionally at a slightly different pace.

QUESTION, *Mr. Reifsnyder*: This is a question also for Mr. Macdonald. You stated toward the end of your remarks that the environmental problems are going to present tremendous technological opportunities and opportunities for economic growth. You also suggested that this is an area for which Canada has a particularly good situation.

I wonder if you could tell us why you feel Canada, in particular, as well as the provinces, has waited to take advantage of those opportunities?

ANSWER, *Mr. Macdonald*: We have a huge stake in it because, notwithstanding the generalization that we are shifting to a human resource base, we are still and will be for some time, affected by our natural resource base. So, we have a large economic stake in managing that process well.

Second, I think it is generally agreed upon that we got off to a pretty early start. I remember some involvement in this as long ago as 1968-69 when we introduced the first environmental act in the government of Ontario. Some good experiences and recognition came from that in many parts of the world.

Third, we have created half a dozen first class centers or facilities of environmental studies across the country. And, fourth, I would say there is strong public support for giving top priority to this matter. People are recognizing how and why it is important. There are many young people, who have, in some sense tended to be turned off by the traditional nature of industry, but they now see an opportunity to be involved in a new kind of industrial revolution, with new creative challenges to making resources go further and do a better job managing them.

Therefore, I think all of those factors taken together happen to provide a particularly good environment in Canada for this process.